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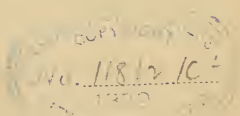


# HORACE GREELEY

BY

WHITELAW REID

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## HORACE GREELEY.

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HORACE GREELEY, an eminent American editor, was born at Amherst, New Hampshire, February 3, 1811. His parents were of Scotch-Irish descent, but the ancestors of both had been in New England for several generations. He was the third of seven children. His father, Zaccheus Greeley, owned a farm of fifty acres of stony, sterile land, from which a bare support was wrung. Horace was a feeble and precocious lad, taking little interest in the ordinary sports of childhood, learning to read before he was able to talk plainly, and being the prodigy of the neighborhood for accurate spelling. Before he was ten years old his father, through bad management and indorsing for his neighbors, became bankrupt, and his home was sold by the sheriff, while Zaccheus Greeley himself fled the State to escape arrest for debt. The family soon removed to West Haven, Vt.,

where, all working together, they made a scanty living as day laborers. Horace Greeley from childhood desired to be a printer, and, when barely eleven years old, tried to be taken as an apprentice in a village office, but was rejected on account of his youth. After three years more with the family as a day laborer at West Haven, he succeeded, with his father's consent, in being apprenticed in the office of *The Northern Spectator*, at East Poultney, Vermont. Here he soon became a good workman, developed a passion for politics, and especially for political statistics, came to be depended upon for more or less of the editing of the paper, and was a figure in the village debating society. He received only \$40 a year, but he spent almost nothing himself, and sent most of his money to his father. In his twentieth year *The Northern Spectator* was suspended. Meantime his father had removed to a small tract of wild land in the dense forests of Western Pennsylvania, thirty miles from Erie. The released apprentice now visited his parents, and worked for a little time with them on the farm, meanwhile seeking employment in various printing offices, and, when he got it, giving nearly his whole earnings to his father. At last, with no



further prospect of work nearer home, he started for New York. He travelled on foot and by canal-boat, entering New York in August, 1831, with all his clothes in a bundle carried over his back with a stick, and with but ten dollars in his pocket. More than half of this sum was exhausted while he made vain efforts to find employment. Many refused, in the belief that he was a runaway apprentice, and his poor, ill-fitting apparel and rustic look were everywhere greatly against him. (At last he found work on a 32mo New Testament, set in agate, double columns, with a middle column of notes in pearl. It was so difficult and so poorly paid that other printers had all abandoned it. He barely succeeded in making enough to pay his board bill, but he finished the task, and thus found subsequent employment easier to get.

In January, 1833, Greeley formed a partnership with Francis V. Story, a fellow-workman. Their combined capital amounted to \$150. Procuring their type on credit, they opened a small office, and undertook the printing of the first cheap paper published in New York. Its projector, Dr. H. D. Sheppard, meant to sell it for one cent, but under the arguments of Gree-

ley he was persuaded to fix the price at two cents. The <sup>Monday</sup> paper failed in three weeks, the printers only losing \$50 or \$60 by the experiment. They still had a "Bank Note Reporter" to print, and soon got some lottery printing. Within six months Story was drowned, but his brother-in-law, James Winchester, took his place in the firm. / Greeley was now asked by James Gordon Bennett to go into partnership with him in starting *The Herald*. He declined the venture, but recommended the partner whom Bennett subsequently took. On the 22d of March, 1834, Greeley and Winchester issued the first number of *The New Yorker*, a weekly literary and news paper, the firm then supposing itself to be worth about \$3,000. Of the first number they sold about 100 copies; of the second, nearly 200. There was an average increase for the next month of about 100 copies per week. The second volume began with a circulation of about 4,550 copies, and with a loss on the first year's publication of \$3,000. The second year ended with 7,000 subscribers, and a further loss of \$2,000. By the end of the third year *The New Yorker* had reached a circulation of 9,500 copies, and a total loss of \$7,000. 7 It was published nearly seven years

and was never profitable, but it was widely popular, and it gave Greeley, who was its sole editor, much prominence.

On the 5th of July, 1836, Greeley married Miss Mary Y. Cheney, a Connecticut school-teacher, whom he had met in a Grahamite (vegetarian) boarding-house in New York.

During the publication of *The New Yorker* he added to the scanty income which the job printing brought him by supplying editorials to *The Daily Whig* and various other publications. In 1838 he had gained such standing as a writer that he was selected by Thurlow Weed, William H. Seward, and other leaders of the Whig party, for the editorship of a campaign paper entitled *The Jeffersonian*, published at Albany. He continued *The New Yorker*, and travelled between Albany and New York each week to edit the two papers. *The Jeffersonian* was a quiet and instructive, rather than a vehement campaign sheet, and the Whigs believed that it had a great effect upon the elections of the next year. When, on the 2d of May, 1840, some time after the nomination by the Whig party of William Henry Harrison for the Presidency, Greeley began the publication of a new weekly campaign

paper, *The Log Cabin*, it sprang at once into a great circulation; 48,000 copies of the first number were sold, and it finally rose to 90,000. It was considered a brilliant political success, but it was not profitable. On April 3, 1841, Greeley announced that on the following Saturday he would begin the publication of a daily newspaper of the same general principles, to be called *The Tribune*. He was now entirely without money. From a personal friend, Mr. James Coggeshall, he borrowed \$1,000, on which capital and the editor's reputation *The Tribune* was founded. It began with 600 subscribers. The first week's expenses were \$525 and the receipts \$92. By the end of the fourth week it had run up a circulation of 6,000, and by the seventh reached 11,000, which was then the full capacity of its press. It was alert, cheerful, and aggressive, was greatly helped by the attacks of rival papers, and promised success almost from the start.

From this time Greeley was popularly identified with *The Tribune*, and its share in the public discussion of the time is his history. It soon became moderately prosperous, and his assured income should have placed him beyond pecuniary worry. In a period of twenty-four

years *The Tribune* divided between its owners the sum of \$1,240,000, besides a surplus of \$381,939 earned and invested in real estate and improved machinery. The average annual dividend on each share (representing  $\frac{1}{100}$  of the property) was \$516.66. Greeley's income was long above \$15,000 per year, frequently as much as \$35,000 or more. But he lacked business thrift, inherited a disposition to indorse for his friends, and was often unable to distinguish between deserving applicants for aid and adventurers. He was thus frequently straitened, and, as his necessities pressed, he sold successive interests in his newspaper. At the outset he owned the whole of it. When it was already clearly established, he took in Thomas M'Elrath as an equal partner, upon the contribution of \$2,000 to the common fund. By the 1st of January, 1849, he had reduced his interest to  $31\frac{1}{2}$  shares out of 100; by July 2, 1860, to 15 shares; in 1868 he owned only 9; and in 1872, only 6. In 1867 the stock sold for \$6,500 per share, and his last sale was for \$9,600. He bought wild lands, took stock in mining companies, desiccated egg companies, patent looms, photo-lithographic companies, gave away profusely, lent to plausible rascals, and was the

ready prey of every new inventor who chanced to find him with money or with property that he could readily convert into money.

In the autumn of 1851 Greeley merged his weekly papers, *The Log Cabin* and *The New Yorker*, into *The Weekly Tribune*, which soon attained as wide circulation as its predecessors, and was much more profitable. It rose in a time of great political excitement to a total circulation of a quarter of a million, and it sometimes had for successive years 140,000 to 150,000. For several years it was rarely much below 100,000. Its subscribers were found throughout all quarters of the northern half of the Union from Maine to Oregon, large packages going to remote rural districts beyond the Mississippi or Missouri, whose only connection with the outside world was through a weekly or semi-weekly mail. The readers of this weekly paper acquired a personal affection for its editor, and he was thus for many years the American writer most widely known and most popular among the rural classes. The circulation of *The Daily Tribune* was never proportionately great—its advocacy of a protective tariff, prohibitory liquor legislation, and other peculiarities, repelling a large support which it

might otherwise have commanded in New York. It rose within a short time after its establishment to a circulation of 20,000, reached 50,000 and 60,000 during the war for the Union, and thereafter ranged at from 30,000 to 45,000. A semi-weekly edition was also printed, which ultimately reached a steady circulation of from 15,000 to 25,000.

From the outset it was a cardinal principle with Greeley to hear all sides, and to extend a special hospitality to new ideas. In *The Tribune's* first year it began to give one column daily to a discussion of the doctrines of Charles Fourier, contributed by Albert Brisbane. Gradually Greeley came to advocate some of these doctrines editorially. In 1846 he had a sharp discussion upon them with a former subordinate, Henry J. Raymond, then employed upon a rival journal. It continued through twelve articles on each side, and was subsequently published in book form. Greeley became personally interested in one of the Fourierite associations, the American Phalanx, at Red Bank, N. J. (1843-50), while the influence of his discussions doubtless led to other socialistic experiments. One of these was that at Brook Farm, which embraced Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel



Hawthorne among its members. When this was abandoned, its president, George Ripley, with one or two other members, sought employment from Greeley upon *The Tribune*. Greeley dissented from many of Fourier's propositions, and in later years was careful to explain that the principle of association for the common good of workingmen and the elevation of labor was the chief feature which attracted him. Co-operation among workingmen he continued to urge throughout his life. In 1848 the Fox Sisters, on his wife's invitation, spent some time at his house. His attitude toward their "rappings" and "spiritual manifestations" was one of observation and inquiry; and, while he never pronounced all the manifestations fraudulent, he distrusted most of them, and declared that as yet he saw no good in them, and nothing specially requiring the attention of intelligent men. From boyhood he had believed in a protective tariff, and throughout his active life he was its most trenchant advocate and propagandist. Besides constantly urging it in the columns of *The Tribune*, he appeared as early as 1843 in a public debate on "The Grounds of Protection," with Samuel J. Tilden and Parke Godwin as his opponents. A series of popular essays



on the subject were published over his own signature in *The Tribune* in 1869, and subsequently republished in book form, with a title-page describing protection to home industry as a system of national co-operation for the elevation of labor. He opposed woman suffrage on the ground that the majority of women did not want it and never would, but aided practical efforts for extending the sphere of woman's employments. He opposed the theatres, and for a time refused to publish their advertisements. He held the most rigid views on the sanctity of marriage and against easy divorce, and vehemently defended them in controversies with Robert Dale Owen and others. He practised and pertinaciously advocated total abstinence from spirituous liquors, but did not regard prohibitory laws as always wise. He denounced the repudiation of State debts or the failure to pay interest on them. He was zealous for Irish repeal, once held a place in the "Directory of the Friends of Ireland," and contributed liberally to its support. He used the occasion of Dickens's first visit to America to urge international copyright, and was one of the few editors to avoid alike the flunkeyism with which Dickens was first received, and the ferocity with

which he was assailed after the publication of his "American Notes." On the occasion of Dickens's second visit to America Greeley presided at the great banquet given him by the press of the country. He made the first elaborate reports of popular scientific lectures by Agassiz and other authorities. He gave ample hearing to the advocates of phonography and of phonetic spelling. He was one of the most conspicuous advocates of the Pacific railroads, and of many other internal improvements.

But it is as an anti-slavery leader, and as perhaps the chief agency in educating the mass of the Northern people to that opposition through legal forms to the extension of slavery which culminated in the election of Abraham Lincoln and the War of the Rebellion, that Greeley's main work was done. Incidents in it were his vehement opposition to the Mexican War as a scheme for more slave territory, the assault made upon him in Washington by Congressman Albert Rust of Arkansas in 1856, an indictment in Virginia in the same year for circulating incendiary documents, perpetual denunciation of him in Southern newspapers and speeches, and the hostility of the Abolitionists, who regarded his course as too conservative. His

anti-slavery work culminated in his appeal to President Lincoln, entitled "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," in which he urged "that all attempts to put down the rebellion and at the same time uphold its inciting cause were "preposterous and futile," and that "every hour of deference to slavery" was "an hour of added and deepened peril to the Union." President Lincoln in his reply said:—"My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery. . . . What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save this Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. . . . I have here stated my purpose according to my views of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free." Precisely one month after the date of this reply the Emancipation Proclamation was issued.

Greeley's political activity, first as a Whig, and then as one of the founders of the Republican party, was incessant; but he held few offices. In 1848-9 he served a three months' term in Congress, filling a vacancy. He introduced the first bill for giving small tracts of Govern-

ment land free to actual settlers, and published an exposure of abuses in the allowance of mileage to members, which corrected the evil but brought him much personal obloquy. In the National Republican Convention in 1860, not being sent by the Republicans of his own State on account of his opposition to Governor Seward as a candidate, he was made a delegate for Oregon. His active hostility to Seward did much to prevent the success of that statesman, and to bring about instead the nomination of Abraham Lincoln. This was attributed by his opponents to personal motives, and a letter from Greeley to Seward, the publication of which he challenged, was produced, to show that in his struggling days he had been wounded at Seward's failure to offer him office. In 1861 he was a candidate for United States Senator, his principal opponent being William M. Evarts. When it was clear that Mr. Evarts could not be elected, his supporters threw their votes for a third candidate, Ira Harris, who was thus chosen over Greeley by a small majority. At the outbreak of the war he favored allowing the Southern States to secede, provided a majority of their people at a fair election should so decide, declaring "that he hoped never to live in a

Republic whereof one section was pinned to the other by bayonets." When the war began he urged the most vigorous prosecution of it. The "on to Richmond" appeal, which appeared day after day in *The Tribune*, was incorrectly attributed to him, and it did not wholly meet his approval; but after the defeat at Bull Run he was widely blamed for it. In 1864 he urged negotiations for peace with representatives of the Southern Confederacy in Canada, and was sent by President Lincoln to confer with them. They were found to have no sufficient authority. In 1864 he was one of the Lincoln Presidential electors for New York. At the close of the war, contrary to the general feeling of his party, he urged universal amnesty and impartial suffrage as the basis of reconstruction. In 1867 his friends again wished to elect him to the Senate of the United States, and the indications were all in his favor. But he refused to be elected under any misapprehension of his attitude, and with what his friends thought unnecessary candor, restated his obnoxious views on universal amnesty at length, just before the time for the election, with the certainty that this would prevent his success. Some months later he signed the bail bond of Jefferson Davis,

and this provoked a torrent of public indignation. He had written a popular history of the late war, the first volume having an immense sale and bringing him unusually large profits. The second was just issued, and the subscribers, in their anger, refused by thousands to receive it. The Union League Club, of New York, gave him notice, through its President, John Jay, of a special meeting called to consider his conduct. In an indignant letter he refused to attend the meeting, and challenged the club to a direct issue. "Your attempt," he wrote, "to base a great, enduring party on the hate and wrath necessarily engendered by a bloody civil war is as though you should plant a colony on an iceberg which had somehow drifted into a tropical ocean. I tell you here that, out of a life earnestly devoted to the good of human kind, your children will select my going to Richmond and signing that bail bond as the wisest act. . . . All I care for is that you make this a square, stand-up fight, and record your judgment by yeas and nays. I care not how few vote with me, nor how many vote against me ; for I know that the latter will repent it in dust and ashes before three years have passed."

The effort to expel him failed. In 1867 he was elected delegate at large to the Convention for the revision of the State constitution. In 1869 he was the Republican candidate for State Comptroller. There was no hope that any one on the ticket that year could be elected, but he received more votes than most of his associates. In 1870 he was nominated for Congress in a Democratic district. His illness prevented his making any canvass, but his nomination reduced the Democratic majority from 2,700 two years before to about 1,000, and he ran 300 ahead of the Republican candidate for Governor.

He was dissatisfied with the conduct of General Grant's administration, and became its sharp critic. The discontent which he did much to develop ended in the organization of the "Liberal Republican" party, which held its National Convention at Cincinnati in 1872, and was confidently expected to nominate Charles Francis Adams for the Presidency. Greeley, however, had unexpected strength, especially among the Southern delegates, and on the sixth ballot received 332 votes against 324 for Adams,—immediate changes reducing the Adams vote still further, so that as the ballot was recorded it



stood—Greeley, 482 ; Adams, 187. For a time the tide of feeling ran strongly in his favor. It was first checked by the action of his life-long opponents, the Democrats, who also nominated him at their National Convention. He expected their support, on account of his attitude toward the South and hostility to Grant, but he thought it a mistake to give him their formal nomination. The event proved his wisdom. Many Republicans who had sympathized with his criticisms of the administration, and with the declaration of principles adopted at the first convention, were repelled by the coalition. This feeling grew stronger until the election. His old party associates regarded him as a renegade, and the Democrats gave him a half-hearted support. The tone of the canvass was one of unusual bitterness, amounting sometimes to actual ferocity. In August, on representations of the alarming state of the contest, he took the field in person, and made a series of campaign speeches, beginning in New England and extending throughout Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, which aroused great enthusiasm, and were regarded at the time by both friends and opponents as the most brilliant continuous exhibition of varied intellectual power ever made by a candidate in a



Presidential canvass. General Grant received in the election 3,597,070 votes; Greeley 2,834,079. The only States Greeley carried were Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Tennessee, and Texas.

He had resigned his editorship of *The Tribune* immediately after the nomination; he now resumed it cheerfully; but it was soon apparent that his powers had been overstrained. For years he had suffered greatly from sleeplessness. During the intense excitement of the campaign the difficulty was increased. Returning from his campaign tour, he went immediately to the bedside of his dying wife, and for some weeks had practically no sleep at all. This resulted in an inflammation of the upper membrane of the brain, delirium, and death. He expired on the 29th of November, 1872. His funeral was a simple but impressive public pageant. The body lay in state in the City Hall, where it was surrounded by crowds of many thousands. The ceremonies were attended by the President and Vice-President of the United States, the Chief-Justice of the Supreme Court, and a large number of eminent public men of both parties, who followed the hearse in a solemn procession, preceded by the Mayor and other civic authorities,

down Broadway. He had been the target of constant attack during his life, and his personal foibles, careless dress, and mental eccentricities were the theme of endless ridicule. But his death revealed the high regard in which he was generally held as a leader of opinion and faithful public servant. "Our later Franklin," Whittier called him, and it is in some such light his countrymen remember him.

In 1851 Greeley visited Europe for the first time, serving as a jurymen at the Crystal Palace Exhibition, appearing before a committee of the House of Commons on newspaper taxes, and urging the repeal of the stamp duty on advertisements. In 1855 he made a second trip to Europe. In Paris he was arrested on the suit of a sculptor, whose statue had been injured in the New York World's Fair (of which he had been a director), and spent two days in Clichy, of which he gave an amusing account. In 1859 he visited California by the overland route, and had numerous public receptions. In 1871 he visited Texas, and his trip through the southern country, where he had once been so odious, was an ovation. About 1852 he purchased a farm at Chappaqua, New York, where he afterward habitually spent his Satur-

days, and experimented in agriculture. He was in constant demand as a lecturer from 1843, when he made his first appearance on the platform, always drew large audiences, and, in spite of his bad management in money matters, received considerable sums, sometimes \$6,000 or \$7,000 for a single winter's lecturing. He was also much sought for as a contributor, over his own signature, to the weekly newspapers, and was sometimes largely paid for these articles. In religious faith he was from boyhood a Universalist, and for many years a conspicuous member of the leading Universalist church in New York.

His published works are:—*Hints Toward Reforms* (New York, 1850); *Glances at Europe* (1851); *History of the Struggle for Slavery Extension* (1856); *Overland Journey to San Francisco* (1860); *The American Conflict* (two vols., Hartford, 1864-66, pp. 648 and 782, dedicated to "John Bright, British Commoner and Christian Statesman, the friend of my country because the friend of mankind"); *Recollections of a Busy Life* (New York, 1868); new edition, with appendix containing an account of his later years, his *Argument on Marriage and Divorce* with Robert Dale Owen, and *Miscellanies*, New

York, 1873); *Essays on Political Economy* (Boston, 1870); *What I know of Farming* (New York, 1871). He also assisted his brother-in-law, John F. Cleveland, in editing *A Political Text-Book* (New York, 1860), and supervised for many years the annual issues of *The Whig Almanac* and *The Tribune Almanac*, comprising extensive political statistics.

Lives of Greeley have been written by James Parton (New York, 1855; new editions, 1868, and Boston, 1872); L. U. Reavis (New York, 1872), and L. D. Ingersoll (Chicago, 1873). There is also a *Memorial of Horace Greeley* (New York, 1873).

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